

Claims

1. A method of conducting an electronic ballot for a ballot operator, the method comprising the steps of:
- 5 publishing a list of candidates in the ballot together with corresponding associated telephone numbers;
- answering calls made to said telephone numbers;
- providing, for each of said telephone numbers, a respective count of answered calls;
- 10 receiving, for each of said candidates, a respective count of messages received from computer terminals, each such message identifiably representing a vote for a said candidate;
- combining the respective counts of answered calls and the respective counts of received messages to form a ballot result; and
- 15 sending the ballot result to the ballot operator.
2. A method of conducting an electronic ballot for a ballot operator, the method comprising the steps of:
- publishing a list of candidates in the ballot together with corresponding
- 20 associated telephone numbers;
- receiving messages from computer terminals, each such message identifiably representing a vote for a said candidate;
- providing, for each of said candidates, a respective count of received messages;
- 25 receiving a respective count of answered calls made to said telephone numbers;
- combining the respective count of received messages and the received respective count of answered calls to form a ballot result; and
- 30 sending the ballot result to the ballot operator.
3. A method of conducting an electronic ballot for a ballot operator, the method comprising the steps of:
- publishing a list of candidates in the ballot together with corresponding associated telephone numbers;

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answering calls made to said telephone numbers;

providing, for each of said telephone numbers, a respective count of answered calls;

receiving messages sent from computer terminals, each such message
5 identifiably representing a vote for a said candidate;

providing, for each of said candidates, a respective count of received messages;

retrieving the respective counts of received messages and the respective counts of answered calls;

10 combining the respective count of answered calls and the respective count of received messages to form a ballot result; and

sending the ballot result to the ballot operator.

4. A method as claimed in either Claim 2 or Claim 3, wherein the respective
15 counts of answered calls are in the form of subtotals on a regional basis; wherein the step of receiving messages from computer terminals includes substeps of identifying the respective source addresses, grouping the received messages on a corresponding regional basis; and wherein the combining step comprises the substeps of summing, for each of the regions and for each of said candidates, the
20 respective count of received messages and the respective count of answered calls to form respective totals, and ranking the respective totals to provide the ballot result in the form of respective regional ballot results.

5. A method as claimed in any one of Claims 2 to 4, wherein said data
25 network addresses are e-mail addresses and said messages are e-mail messages each being addressed to an e-mail address selected from a set of published e-mail addresses correspondingly associated with said candidates.

?76. A method as claimed in any one of Claims 2 to 5, including the steps of :
30 storing on a server, screen display data including identifiers for the candidates; and

receiving, at the server, requests sent from the computer terminals for respective users to participate in the ballot, and in response sending the screen display data including identifiers for the candidates to the computer terminals;

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and wherein the messages are constituted by respective HTML pages, each such page containing data representing the identity of a candidate selected by a respective user from a screen display of the candidate identifiers.

5 7. A method as claimed in Claim 6, wherein the step of receiving requests for respective users to participate in the ballot includes a substep of validating a user in accordance with a security code contained in the request.

8. A method as claimed in either Claim 6 or Claim 7, including the steps of :
10 storing on the server, screen display data including identifiers for current ballots; and

receiving, at the server, requests sent from the computer terminals for respective users to be sent a list of current ballots, and in response sending the screen display data including identifiers for current ballots to the computer
15 terminals;

and wherein said requests sent from the computer terminals for respective users to participate in the ballot are constituted by respective HTML pages, each such page containing data representing the identity of the ballot selected by a respective user from a screen display of the current ballot identifiers.

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9. A method as claimed in Claim 8, when dependent on Claim 6, wherein the step of receiving requests for respective users to be sent a list of current ballots includes a substep of validating a user in accordance with a security code contained in the request.

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10. A method as claimed in any one of Claims 6 to 9, including the steps of :
storing data for a respective video presentation relating to each of the candidates;

receiving, at the server, a request sent from a said computer terminal for
30 access to a video presentation identified in the request, and, in response,

including that requesting computer terminal in a multicast session for the requested video presentation.

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11. A method as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 3, wherein the respective counts of answered calls are in the form of subtotals on a regional basis, and wherein the combining step treats the respective counts of received messages as being in respect of a notional region.

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12. A method as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 3, wherein the combining step comprises the substeps of summing, for each of said candidates, the respective count of received messages and the respective count of answered calls to form respective totals, and ranking the respective totals to provide the result of
10 the ballot.

13. A method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the respective counts of answered calls are in the form of subtotals on a regional basis; wherein the respective counts of received messages are in the form of subtotals on a
15 corresponding regional basis; and wherein the combining step comprises the substeps of summing, for each of the regions and for each of said candidates, the respective count of received messages and the respective count of answered calls to form respective totals, and ranking the respective totals to provide the ballot result in the form of respective regional ballot results.

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14. A method as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 13, wherein the sending step is performed in response to receipt of a ballot result request from the ballot operator.

25 15. A method as claimed in Claim 14, wherein the step of receiving a ballot result request from the ballot operator comprises a substep of validating the ballot operator in accordance with a security code contained in the request.

30 16. Apparatus for conducting an electronic ballot for a ballot operator, the apparatus comprising:

means for answering calls made to predetermined telephone numbers, each telephone number being associated with a respective published candidate identity;

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FOI b7D b7C b7E b7F b7G b7H b7I b7J b7K b7L b7M b7N b7O b7P b7Q b7R b7S b7T b7U b7V b7W b7X b7Y b7Z

means for providing, for each of said telephone numbers, a respective count of answered calls;

means for receiving respective counts of messages from computer terminals, each such message identifiably representing a vote for a said candidate,
 5 and the respective counts of answered calls, and for combining the respective counts of messages and the respective counts of answered calls to form a ballot result; and

means for sending the ballot result to the ballot operator.

10 17. Apparatus for conducting an electronic ballot for a ballot operator, and for use with provided respective counts of answered calls, the calls having been made to predetermined telephone numbers, each telephone number being associated with a respective published candidate identity, the apparatus comprising:

means for receiving messages from computer terminals, each such
 15 message identifiably representing a vote for a said candidate, and for providing, for each of said candidates, a respective count of received messages;

means for receiving the provided respective counts of received messages and for combining the respective counts of received messages and the respective counts of answered calls to form a ballot result; and

20 means for sending the ballot result to the ballot operator.

18. Apparatus for conducting an electronic ballot for a ballot operator, the apparatus comprising:

means for answering calls made to predetermined telephone numbers,
 25 each telephone number being associated with a respective published candidate identity;

means for providing, for each of said telephone numbers, a respective count of answered calls;

means for receiving messages from computer terminals, each such
 30 message identifiably representing a vote for a said candidate, and for providing, for each of said candidates, a respective count of received messages;

means for receiving the respective counts of received messages and the respective counts of answered calls, and for combining the received counts to form a ballot result;

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means for sending the ballot result to the ballot operator.

19. Apparatus as claimed in either Claim 17 or Claim 18, for use when the respective counts of answered calls comprise counts for each of a plurality of regions, and wherein the means for receiving messages from computer terminals is arranged to identify the respective source addresses, to group the received messages on a corresponding regional basis as for the calls; and the combining means is arranged to sum, for each of the regions and for each of said candidates, the respective counts of received messages and the respective counts of answered calls to form respective totals, and to rank the respective totals to provide the ballot result in the form of respective regional ballot results.

20. Apparatus as claimed in either Claim 17 or Claim 18, for use when the respective counts of answered calls comprise counts for each of a plurality of regions, and wherein the combining means is arranged to treat the respective counts of received messages as being in respect of a notional region.

21. Apparatus as claimed in any one of Claims 17 to 20, wherein the means for receiving messages from computer terminals and for providing a respective count of received messages is responsive to such messages in the form of e-mail messages.

22. Apparatus as claimed in any one of Claims 17 to 20, comprising a server arranged for storage of screen display data including identifiers for the candidates and comprising (i) means for receiving requests sent from the computer terminals for respective users to participate in the ballot, and (ii) means responsive to receipt of such a request for sending the screen display data including identifiers for the candidates to the computer terminals;

and wherein the means for receiving messages is arranged to receive HTML pages, each such page constituting a said message and containing data representing the identity of a candidate.

23. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 22, wherein the server is :

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arranged for storage of screen display data including identifiers for current ballots;

responsive to receipt of requests sent from the computer terminals for respective users to be sent a list of current ballots to send the requested screen
5 display data to the computer terminals; and

arranged to receive said requests sent from the computer terminals for respective users to participate in the ballot in the form of respective HTML pages, each such page containing data representing the identity of the ballot selected by a respective user from a screen display of the current ballot identifiers.

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24. Apparatus as claimed in any one of Claims 17 to 23, comprising means arranged to store data for a respective video presentation relating to each of the candidates, and to respond to receipt of a request sent from a said computer terminal for access to a video presentation identified in the request by including
15 that requesting computer terminal in a multicast session for the requested video presentation.

25. Apparatus as claimed in any one of Claims 16 to 24, comprising means for validating a person in accordance with an identity for the person and a security
20 code.

26. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 25, when dependent on Claim 23 or on Claim 24 when dependent on Claim 23, and wherein the means for receiving requests sent from the computer terminals for respective users to participate in the
25 ballot is arranged to derive from each such request a respective identity for a user together with a respective associated security code, and to pass these to the validating means.

27. Apparatus as claimed in any one of Claims 16 to 26, wherein the sending
30 means is arranged to send the ballot result upon receipt of a ballot result request from the ballot operator

28. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 27, when dependent on either Claim 25 or Claim 26, wherein the sending means is arranged to derive from the request an

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identity for the ballot operator and a security code, and to pass these to the validating means.

29. A method of conducting an electronic ballot for a ballot operator, the
5 method being substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to Figures 4 to
10 of the drawings.

30. An apparatus for conducting an electronic ballot for a ballot operator, the
apparatus being substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to Figures 4
10 to 10 of the drawings.

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